THE KING'S FOUNDATION

Department for Communities
An Roinn Pobal
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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

ALL-IRELAND HERITAGE SKILLS PROGRAMME 2025-26

PROGRAMME INFORMATION

ALL-IRELAND HERITAGE SKILLS PROGRAMME

THE ALL-IRELAND HERITAGE SKILLS PROGRAMME SUPPORTS THOSE WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN BOTH NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND TO PUSH THEIR SKILLS TO THE NEXT LEVEL AND CONTINUE ON THEIR JOURNEY TO BECOMING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MASTER CRAFTSPEOPLE.

INTRODUCTION

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme partners believe that it is crucial to preserve the wisdom and knowledge that embodies many of the traditional building skills which have shaped our historical built environment. As many workers in the sector now reach retirement age it is vital that these skills are passed on to the next generation of master craftspeople. In doing so, we strive to ensure that the knowledge and practical craft skills required to restore and conserve our historical buildings remains alive, as well as demonstrating the significant role that traditional craft skills can play in creating new spaces and places.

Each year the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme brings together a cohort of up to 8 students for a period of twelve months to gain practical experience in traditional building skills, conservation and repair, interdisciplinary practice, and the opportunity to work towards an Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction).

These students represent a diverse and skilled cohort of individual craftspeople who demonstrate a passion for their particular trade. Many of our candidates have followed pathways through college programmes, or have acquired significant practical experience working within the sector.

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme aims to galvanise this experience, providing participants the opportunity to work alongside like-minded individuals, expand their portfolio of skills, and build networks across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

PROGRAMME AIMS

- To upskill a cohort of craftspeople in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, providing specialist knowledge, interdisciplinary skills and on-the-job training.
- To develop a showcase project that will build enthusiasm for heritage craft training in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- To create a network of practitioners, organisations and individuals, across borders, who can work towards the development of future programmes and initiatives within the heritage crafts sector.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is a 12-month course which supports those working in the construction sector to push their skills to the next level and continue on their journey to becoming the next generation of traditional master craftspeople.

SUMMER SCHOOL

3 WEEKS

The course starts with an intensive three-week Summer School, delivered on the Dumfries House estate in Scotland.

The Summer School is an opportunity to gain insight into the broader teachings of The King's Foundation and includes activities such as drawing classes, geometry and lectures as well as architectural tours.

During the second week, participants take part in a series of hands-on craft workshops with master craftspeople, gaining an appreciation for the many different skills and materials which make up our built environment.

The Summer School concludes with a 'Design and Build' workshop based around traditional principles of design and construction.

INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS

35 WEEKS

A key aspect of the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme involves participation in up to thirty-five weeks of Industry Placements with craftspeople and traditional construction companies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Placements are tailored towards the specific trade area of each participant and provide an excellent opportunity to build practical skills, and gather vital evidence for those working towards gaining the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills

Participants typically take part in two or three placements with different organisations. Placements are arranged on behalf of participants by The King's Foundation team drawing on our extensive network of placement providers.

WINTER SCHOOL MATERIALS WEEKS BUSINESS COURSE

7 WEEKS

WINTER SCHOOL

In January, following the completion of the first industry placement, participants attend a residential Winter School, hosted by the Heritage Council in Kilkenny.

Over the duration of two weeks, participants engage with talks and workshops on different aspects of the wider built environment, heritage and sustainability.

MATERIALS WEEKS

The programme is interspersed with five week-long residential courses that focus on materials in different regions of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. These weeks will explore the themes of stone, wood, lime, thatch and earth.

BUSINESS COURSE

Participants are also introduced to a range of heritage professionals and business experts throughout the programme who give advice about how to work as a heritage professional within the current business environment.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

2 WEEKS

The Collaborative Project is an opportunity for participants to work collaboratively on a project related to heritage skills in Ireland.

During the early stages of the programme, participants are introduced to the scope of the project by the The King's Foundation team. Work and engagement on the project continues when the group reconvenes at various stages throughout the programme.

Having completed the Industry Placements, the group come together for a final time to complete the collaborative project as a team.

The Collaborative Project is an opportunity to demonstrate many of the skills acquired during the industry placements, and also to learn from the variety of other trade areas represented in the group.

PROGRAMME DATES 2025-26

[Subject to change]

START	SUNDAY 13TH JULY 2025
SUMMER SCHOOL 3 WEEKS	13TH JULY - 2ND AUGUST DUMFRIES HOUSE ESTATE, SCOTLAND
BREAK 1	4TH AUGUST - 8TH AUGUST
NVQ INDUCTION 2 WEEKS	11TH AUGUST - 22ND AUGUST MOIRA, NORTHERN IRELAND
PLACEMENT 1 15 WEEKS	25TH AUGUST - 19TH DECEMBER
MATERIALS' WEEK 1	29TH SEPTEMBER – 3RD OCTOBER
MATERIALS' WEEK 2	10TH NOVEMBER – 14TH NOVEMBER
BREAK 2	22ND DECEMBER 2025 – 2ND JANUARY 2026
WINTER SCHOOL & BUSINESS COURSE 2 WEEKS	5TH JANUARY – 16TH JANUARY KILKENNY, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
PLACEMENT 2 10 WEEKS	19TH JANUARY – 3RD APRIL
MATERIALS' WEEK 3	23RD FEBRUARY – 27TH FEBRUARY
BREAK 3	6TH APRIL – 10TH APRIL
MATERIALS' WEEK 4	13TH APRIL – 17TH APRIL
PLACEMENT 3 8 WEEKS	20TH APRIL – 19TH JUNE
MATERIALS' WEEK 5	18TH MAY – 22ND MAY
COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 2 WEEKS	22ND JUNE – 3RD JULY
END	3RD JULY 2026

FURTHER INFORMATION

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is geared towards those working across both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with experience in craft areas such as: stonemasonry, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, blacksmithing, plastering, thatching, roofing and tiling, painting and decorating.

In addition to practical experience in a building craft discipline, applicants should have an interest in developing their craft with a focus towards heritage and traditional methods whilst striking a balance with 21st Century ways of working.

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme aims to highlight the holistic nature of our built environment and as such promotes multidisciplinary learning, providing exposure to elements of architecture, design and a range of craft skills. Each year the programme hosts up to a maximum of 8 participants. Participants are selected via a process of application, shortlisting, and interview.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate at least **ONE** of the following:

- **QQI/NFQ Level 4 or 5 or equivalent in a building craft/construction subject.**
- **NVQ/SVQ Level 2 or 3 or equivalent in a building craft/construction subject.**
- **Qualification in a building craft/construction subject from a recognised authority.**
- **Significant working experience in your chosen craft/ trade area.**

Please note, you will required to submit a digital portfolio containing examples of work / projects you have undertaken in relation to your craft / trade area.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In most cases you will be required to hold **ONE** of the following in order to be eligible for the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme:

- **UK or IRELAND Passport Holder**
- **Normally resident in the Republic of Ireland**
- **Normally resident in Northern Ireland**
- **Settled Status / Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK**
- **Pre-settled Status**

Acceptance onto the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme alone is not sufficient to obtain the appropriate residency / study visa. Please note that The King's Foundation, the Heritage Council or Historic Environment Division cannot assist you in obtaining a visa.

If you require a visa to work or study in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland, please contact the Programme Coordinator prior to submitting an application.

ATTENDANCE

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is a full-time course, commencing on 13th July 2025 and concluding on 3rd July 2026.

Breaks are scheduled throughout as per the course timetable. Please note that no holiday leave can be taken outside of this period.

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is generally delivered Monday – Friday of each week, however, you will be required to attend additional hours during particular aspects of the course such as the Summer School. Individual placement providers will advise on your hours of attendance during your Industry Placements.

FUNDING & BURSARIES

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is made possible due to the generosity of a wide range of individuals and organisations who support the programme each year.

All participants of the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme 2025-26 will be awarded a full scholarship covering the course fees, as well as being provided with a monthly tax-free bursary of £1400 / €1600 to help towards living costs.

Participants are required to arrange and pay for all accommodation, travel, subsistence and any associated living costs while on placement. The majority of materials needed for the course will be provided.

ACCOMMODATION

During the Summer School, Winter School, and Material Weeks accommodation will be provided.

During Industry Placements you will be required to source and pay for your own short term accommodation which will enable you to fully participate in the programme as arranged by The King's Foundation team.

Due to the nature of the construction sector, it may not always be possible to provide participants with exact placement locations/ details well in advance. Therefore, on some occasions you may be required to find accommodation at short notice. Every effort will be made to ensure placements are confirmed as soon as possible.

> "THE MATERIALS WEEKS HAVE PROVIDED US ALL WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENT MATERIALS. IT'S BEEN A PRIVILEGE TO TAKE PART IN WORKSHOPS THAT I MAY NEVER HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO OTHERWISE."

INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS

A key aspect of the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme will involve participation in up to 35 weeks of Industry Placements with craftspeople and traditional construction companies around the UK.

Industry Placements are arranged by The King's Foundation drawing our extensive network across the sector. There are a number of factors which need to be considered when arranging and confirming placements. Examples of some considerations include:

- **Placement providers workload.**
- **Placement providers insurance provision.**
- **Placement providers capacity to monitor a student.**
- **Location of placement provider and projects.**
- **Duration of placement.**
- **Relevance of work in-line with NVQ requirements**
- **Relevance of work in-line with the ethos of the programme.**
- **Relevance of the work in line with funding requirements.**
- **Your prior experience.**

NVQ DIPLOMA IN HERITAGE SKILLS

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme aims to build capacity within the traditional building skills sector. One way of supporting this is through providing participants with the opportunity to work towards a Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills (Construction). Those successful in gaining a place on the programme will be required to undertake this qualification wherever possible.

The Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills (Construction) is an on site assessed qualification (i.e. evidence is gathered through participation in live projects, not simulated work). Obtaining evidence in traditional conservation, restoration and repair methods will be a priority for those undertaking this qualification.

A participants eligibility for pursuing the NVQ qualification will be reviewed by an appropriate NVQ Assessor at the start of the programme. Where a participant is deemed eligible, it is expected that they will undertake the NVQ qualification.

Those undertaking the NVQ will meet with their assigned assessor throughout the year and have regular telephone conversations and email correspondence. It is the participants responsibility to ensure that they collect all of the relevant information and evidence as requested by the assigned assessor, ensuring any evidence is submitted on time.

The Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills is trade specific, i.e. Stone, Wood Occupations, Solid Plastering. Due to time constraints of the programme, and/or limited availability of NVQ Assessors it may not be possible to make the qualification available in all trade areas.

REPORTING & EVALUATION

As part of a participants attendance on the programme, feedback and evaluation will be required at various points in the course. These reports should reflect the tasks that have been performed and the knowledge acquired.

Reporting and evaluation is a vital part of our agreement with many of the programme sponsors and funders. Each evaluation will be accessible online, and should be completed within the time requirements as set by the Programme Manager, this is typically within one week.

A number of our sponsors and funders may nominate specific students on the programme that they would like to follow more closely during their time on the course.

We will inform participants if this is the case and may look to introduce participants to a key contact within the organisation. As part of this nomination participants may be required to provide additional information, complete additional feedback forms, attend specific events, or be featured in specific publicity material.

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

Should you be successful in gaining a place on the programme you must ensure that you have access to appropriate workwear, including waterproofs, winter clothing and steel toecap boots.

During the Industry Placements participants will generally be required to bring their own set of 'core hand tools' i.e. any hand tools that you would use on a regular basis as per your trade.

PPE such as hard hats, googles, gloves, hi-viz vests and masks will be provided.

The programme partners will not make any reimbursements for damage, loss, and/or wear and tear of your own tools and equipment.

PARTNERS

THE KING'S FOUNDATION

The King's Foundation supports people to create community through championing a sustainable approach to how we live our lives and build our homes. By teaching traditional arts and skills and restoring historic sites, The King's Foundation is leading the way forward. We work nationally and internationally but at the heart of our organisation is the heritage-led regeneration of the Dumfries House estate and its wider community, where our principles and philosophies are explored and put into practice. The work of The King's Foundation is inspired by our President, HM The King, and his philosophy of harmony: that by understanding the balance, the order and the relationships between ourselves and the natural world we can create a more sustainable future.

THE HERITAGE COUNCIL

Established under The Heritage Act 1995, the Heritage Council is a public body based in the Republic of Ireland whose mission is to develop a wide understanding of the vital contribution that our heritage makes to our social, environmental and economic well-being. The Heritage Council has a particular responsibility to promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in national heritage. The Heritage Council also provides policy advice for government on heritage including issues impacting the built, natural and cultural heritage.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT DIVISION DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

Department for Communities is the largest of Northern Ireland's nine government departments. Within the Department, Historic Environment Division records, protects, conserves, enhances and promotes the historic environment to secure its benefits for current and future generations. It passionately believes that the historic environment is of value to us all and that we should all be able to enjoy it and participate in sustaining it. It believes that protecting and investing in our historic environment is essential to creating a better future, because it supports our prosperity, strengthens our society, and shapes our character. These beliefs have shaped its aim: 'Helping communities to enjoy and realise the value of our historic environment'.

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APPLY NOW

Applications for the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme 2025-26 are now open. To apply please visit The King's Foundation website at:

KINGS-FOUNDATION.ORG/
ALL-IRELAND-HERITAGE-SKILLS-PROGRAMME

For your application to be considered please ensure you complete the online application form, with reference and upload the accompanying portfolio in the correct format.

If you have any queries about the programme or your application please contact:
Michael.Goodger@Kings-Foundation.org

Deadline for receipt of applications:
FRIDAY 11TH APRIL 2025 by 5PM

Please note that applications received after this time will not be considered.

Interviews will take place online in early May 2025.

2023/24 students' graduation at Dumfries House - September 2024